

# The Biopolitics of Manning the Royal Navy in Late Stuart England

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**Abstract** This article examines the Royal Navy's implementation between 1690 and 1710 of new and publicly controversial policies, grounded in quantitative technologies, to manage the multitude of English seamen. These policies and their promotion can be profitably interpreted using the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics. Naval biopolitics meant mobilizing and promoting political arithmetic in the service of the fiscal-naval state. Thus, naval biopolitics was both a new model of statecraft and a form of state publicity, that is, a genre of works that strove to influence government policy and public opinion by promoting projects that a polemicist argued the state could and should undertake to better govern its subjects. The directives, legislation, and pamphlet literature of naval biopolitics projected a fiscal-naval state capable of counting, tracking, and mobilizing the national stock of seamen onto its ships in a predictable, salubrious, and, most crucially, orderly fashion. However, English naval biopolitics endured much longer as a genre of state propaganda than as a method of mobilizing the population of seamen onto ships.

Our disease is the want of seamen and that we have not in England and its dominions that which is sufficient for both our trade, and for our Fleet.

—*The necessity of increasing our English Seamen* (c. 1690)<sup>1</sup>

The lack of certain people—able and healthy sailors—generated a new kind of police in late Stuart England.<sup>2</sup> During the wars against France between 1689 and 1714, the clash of strategic ambitions with demographic, economic, and political realities gave rise to new governmental approaches to the multitude of English seamen, their numbers, welfare, and health. In turn, these methods provoked vigorous public debates about potential solutions to the problem of manning the navy. This combination of public discourse and state activity directed at the health and welfare of seafarers marked the birth of naval biopolitics in late Stuart England. However, English

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<sup>1</sup> ADL/J/8, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (hereafter NMM).

<sup>2</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain* (London, 2002), 209–10.

naval biopolitics enjoyed a longer life as a genre of state publicity than as a method of mobilizing the population of seamen onto ships. By *state publicity*, I mean rhetorical works that strove to influence government policy and public opinion by promoting projects that a polemicist argued the state could and should undertake to better govern its subjects.

Any attempt to apply the concept of biopolitics—first advanced in Michel Foucault's 1970s lectures on the rise of modern forms of power, including a kind of disciplinary power (the conduct of conduct) that he called governmentality—to early modern history will no doubt strike many readers as provocative.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, there is much to gain from considering under a Foucauldian optic—the concept of biopolitics—the Royal Navy's implementation between 1690 and 1710 of new and publicly controversial policies, grounded in quantitative technologies, to manage the multitude of English seamen. For as Foucault mobilized the past in order to promote his philosophical program, naval biopolitics meant, *mutatis mutandis*, mobilizing and promoting political arithmetic in the service of the fiscal-naval state.<sup>4</sup> Like its distant German descendant called cameralism, late Stuart naval biopolitics was both a new model of statecraft and a form of state publicity.<sup>5</sup> Naval biopolitics in its directives, legislation, and pamphlet literature projected a fiscal-naval state capable of counting, tracking, and mobilizing the national stock of seamen onto its ships in a predictable, salubrious, and, most crucially, orderly fashion.<sup>6</sup> However, the chaotic, unhealthy, suspicious, and refractory multitude of seamen endured mostly untouched by the dialectic of experimental policies and publicized proposals directed against the navy's manning problem.

As Foucault theorized, a new kind of state power that applied particularly to bodies emerged in eighteenth-century Europe. This power abstracted subjects into populations, which rulers increasingly targeted in policies intending to quantify and to regulate biological aspects of human life, including health; Foucault called these techniques of rule biopolitics.<sup>7</sup> Unsurprisingly, both Foucault's thesis and his chronology are controversial, yet it is evident that new theories and modes of governing, grounded in the idea of populations of subjects, did emerge across early modern European polities.<sup>8</sup> Colonies especially, both proximate and overseas, created

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79*, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke, 1999), 317–25; idem, "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York, 2003), 35, 242–48.

<sup>4</sup> Mark S. R. Jenner and Bertrand O. Taithe, "The Historiographical Body," in *Companion to Medicine in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Roger Cooter and John Pickstone (New York, 2003), 187–200, at 191; Ted McCormick, *William Petty and the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic* (New York, 2009), 7–10; N. A. M. Rodger, "From the 'Military Revolution' to the 'Fiscal-Naval State,'" *Journal for Maritime Research* 13, no. 2 (November 2011): 119–28; Anthony Page, "The Seventy Years War, 1744–1815, and Britain's Fiscal-Naval State," *War and Society* 34, no. 3 (July 2015): 162–86.

<sup>5</sup> Andre Wakefield, *The Disordered Police State: German Cameralism as Science and Practice* (Chicago, 2009), 80, 142.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Defoe, *An Essay upon Projects*, Wing D832 [English Short-Title Catalogue Reference Number] (London, 1697), 10–11. See also the section "Of Seamen," 124–32.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York, 2007), 68–72, 104–9.

<sup>8</sup> Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1978), 136–37; Andrea Rusnock, *Vital Accounts: Quantifying Health and Population in Eighteenth-*

possibilities and generated pressures to which regimes responded by conceiving of human collectives as populations whose qualities and numerical sizes could determine success or failure for the sovereign.<sup>9</sup> To contemporaries, the policy of manipulating human collectives was political arithmetic. Late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland is a prime example of a place where English rulers sought to measure and transform particular populations in order to better extract resources and maximize governance.<sup>10</sup> The employment of surveys, lists, censuses, and other quantitative technologies later became crucial for managing slave populations in the West Indies and North America.<sup>11</sup> The birth of biopolitics was long and painful for its countless human subjects in European and imperial contexts over the early modern era.

The reasons that the number and the health of seamen became both objects of public policy and matters of public disputation are well known. The Nine Years' War and the War of the Spanish Succession both demanded huge numbers of sailors.<sup>12</sup> The English merchant marine, unlike the French or Spanish equivalents, remained operational during wartime to supply the nation and to help fund the war effort through customs duties, which meant that the navy and merchants competed for maritime labor.<sup>13</sup> Seamen tended to favor the merchant service because it could pay double the 24s per month offered by the navy. The competition for labor was especially fierce during the later seventeenth century. The number of seamen, as with other laboring groups, had declined in relative terms as population growth stalled after 1650. The simultaneous expansion of overseas trade markedly enhanced the value of maritime labor.<sup>14</sup> There simply were not enough *able* (that is, qualified) English seamen to "hand, reef and steer" in order to meet the navy's and the merchant marine's work-force demands in wartime. The problem persisted even though, during a war, Navigation Act restrictions on foreigners serving in the

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*Century England* (Cambridge, 2002), 4, 183–85; Claudia Stein, "The Birth of Biopower in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Medical History* 55, no. 3 (July 2011): 331–37; Ted McCormick, "Population: Modes of Seventeenth-Century Demographic Thought," in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and its Empire*, ed. Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind (New York, 2013), 25–45.

<sup>9</sup> For the opportunities in Richard Hakluyt's "Discourse of Western Planting," see David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (New York, 2000), 74–75.

<sup>10</sup> McCormick, *William Petty*, 93–101; George Rosen, "Medical Care and Social Policy in Seventeenth Century England," in *From Medical Police to Social Medicine: Essays on the History of Health Care* (New York, 1974), 159–75, at 163.

<sup>11</sup> Kathleen Wilson, "Rethinking the Colonial State: Family, Gender and Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century British Frontiers," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (December 2011): 1294–1322; Katherine Paugh, "The Politics of Childbearing in the British Caribbean and the Atlantic World during the Age of Abolition, 1776, 1838," *Past and Present* 221 (November 2013): 119–60.

<sup>12</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London, 1989), Table 2.1.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton, 1965), 239–40; Stephen Francis Gradish, "The Manning of the British Navy during the Seven Years War" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1971); J. S. Bromley, introduction to *The Manning of the Royal Navy: Selected Public Pamphlets, 1693–1873* (London, 1976), xiii–xlv.

<sup>14</sup> Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (New York, 1987), 16–17, 31–35; Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, 2000), 229–35, 316–17; Paul Slack, "Plenty of People": *Perceptions of Population in Early Modern England* (Reading, 2011).

merchant service were suspended. Indeed, by 1694 the navy was pressing men “of able bodies, and between eighteen and fifty years” of age. In other words, older seamen were not exempt from the press gang during desperate times.<sup>15</sup>

British maritime and naval historians continue to debate the relative merits and meanings of the subjection of seamen during the “Age of Sail” to the interests of the fiscal-naval state and commercial capitalists.<sup>16</sup> Scholars argue over, for example, the degree to which the navy’s traditional and coercive answer to its chronic shortage of sailors, particularly at war’s outbreak—impressment—represented a challenge to the senior armed service’s image as the bulwark of national liberty.<sup>17</sup> The disagreement among historians about the level of coercion versus volunteerism for manning the Royal Navy reflects in turn different judgments about the degree and volume of social conflict within Georgian society and the wider British Empire.<sup>18</sup> Even scholars who reserve judgment on the paradox of forcing men to serve the cause of British freedoms acknowledge that manning the navy was *the* most intractable problem confronting the English and then the British imperial state between 1689 and 1815.<sup>19</sup>

However, the literature on the long eighteenth-century Royal Navy’s manning problems has overlooked the connections that contemporaries made publicly—primarily via print—between forcing sailors into fighting ships, the health of seamen, and possessing a healthy stock of mariners willing and able to serve the crown. Observers within and without the late Stuart navy perceived the lack of able seamen and the overabundance of sick and wounded sailors as twin symptoms of chronic and systemic disorders in the state’s approach to the multitude of mariners. As the epigraph to this article suggests, these disorders were understood to be connected to the overall health of the body politic. What the late seventeenth century witnessed, in other words, was the birth of a form of public discourse that purported to diagnose the disorders underlying the navy’s manning problems and that prescribed quantitatively grounded techniques for their cure. As the remainder of this

<sup>15</sup> Estimate of the total number of seamen in England in 1700, 2 December 1703, BL Add. MSS. 5439, fol. 164; “Admiralty to Sir Robert Rich, Orders and Instructions for Impressment of Seamen,” 23 February 1694, Rich Papers, X.d. 451 (116), fol. 1r-v, Folger Shakespeare Library (hereafter FSL), Washington, DC; James A. Johnston, “Parliament and the Navy, 1688–1714,” (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 1968), 308; David J. Starkey, “War and the Market for Seafarers in Britain, 1736–1792,” in *Shipping and Trade, 1750–1950: Essays in International Maritime Economic History*, ed. Lewis R. Fischer and Helge W. Nordvik (Pontefract, 1990), 25–42.

<sup>16</sup> For an introduction, see Richard J. Blakemore, “The Legal World of English Sailors, c. 1575–1729,” in *Law, Labour and Empire: Comparative Perspectives on Seafarers, c. 1500–1800*, ed. Maria Fusaro, Bernard Allaire, Richard J. Blakemore, and Tjil Vanneste (Basingstoke, 2015), 100–20.

<sup>17</sup> John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III: Its State and Direction* (Cambridge, 1953), 122–24, 596–601; Isaac Land, *War, Nationalism and the British Sailor, 1750–1850* (New York, 2009), 7–10, 17–20, 67–70; Nicholas Rodgers, *The Press Gang: Naval Impressment and Its Opponents in Georgian Britain* (London, 2007); Denver Brunzman, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World* (Charlottesville, 2013); J. R. Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang: Volunteers, Impressment and the Naval Manpower Problem in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (New York, 1986); Margaret Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy: British Sea Power, 1750–1815* (Farnham, 2002); Nicholas Rodgers, *Mayhem: Post-War Crime and Violence in Britain, 1748–53* (New Haven, 2012), 35–87.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Baugh, ed., *Naval Administration, 1715–1750* (London, 1977), xxii; idem, “The Eighteenth-Century Navy as a National Institution, 1690–1815,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Royal Navy*, ed. J. R. Hill (New York, 1995), 120–61, at 133.

article will show, naval biopolitics in the late Stuart era was both a new style of statecraft that ultimately failed to gain traction and a partially successful genre of fiscal-naval state propaganda, conceived by men who dreamed of applying innovative administrative technologies that would engender a burgeoning population of healthy, able, and well-ordered seamen.

### POLICING SICK AND INJURED BODIES: THE NAVY'S Qs AND Rs

Soon after the beginning of the Nine Years' War, the challenge of caring for and keeping seamen in the navy propelled the Admiralty toward a new policy—the Qs (query) and Rs (run)—aimed at disciplining the bodies of sick and injured seamen. That policy in turn provoked for the first time a public debate over the navy's health care administration, which soon became overlaid with public discourses—in print and in Parliament—about new methods for better manning the navy. Indeed, impressment was criticized in print as early as 1689 as a “confused scramble of men” that failed to address properly the national shortage of seafarers. Other polemicists declared that pressing sailors into the navy was unhealthy. “The greatest cause of the distempers which do usually raigne among the seamen,” noted one, “[is] the nastiness of the prest men, who being pick't up and down the streets, so for the most part want clothes and linen to shift them, whereby they fall sick and so infect the rest.”<sup>20</sup>

The existing system of onshore health care only worsened the navy's chronic manning shortage.<sup>21</sup> For Richard Gibson, intermittently active as an administrator since the 1650s, putting the navy's sick and wounded “in soe many lewd Alehouses in sea port towns” was a “fatall mischief.” This practice shortened the lives of many, retarded the recovery of others, and cost the Treasury dearly because the sick or injured were allowed up to a month's pay while on shore.<sup>22</sup> In particular, the women who nursed many sick and injured seamen in so-called town quarters became a source of moral and material concern for some naval officials. Landladies were accused of using alcohol and guile to swindle seamen from their pay, delay their recovery, or worst of all, encourage them to desert the service.<sup>23</sup> According to this argument, the navy's health care administration fostered disease and desertion, logical consequences of placing sick and injured sailors, men who were professionally cut off from the institution of normative manhood—the patriarchal household—into largely female-run dens of disorder.<sup>24</sup> Thus, a gendered view of effective and

<sup>20</sup> *Propositions for Gaining and Encouraging Seamen in His Majesty's Service*, Wing P3779A [1689], 2; “Proposal for manning the fleet” [1690], ADL/J/5, NMM.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Douglas, Dover Downs, to Admiralty commissioner Richard Rich, 29 November 1694, Rich Papers, X.d. 451 (126), FSL.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Gibson, “Comparison of Doctor Richard Lower his proposal for better curing all sick and wounded seamen put a shore out of their Maj. fleet with the present management of it under the Commissioners,” 9 December 1690, BL Add. MSS. 11602, fol. 7; “Memorial for the king about the fleet, flag officers, admiralty, navy board, victualling and sick and wounded commissioners,” 5 October 1693, BL Add. MSS. 11602, fol. 234v.

<sup>23</sup> The National Archives (hereafter TNA), ADM 1/3593, Navy Board to Admiralty, 3 March 1703; TNA, ADM 99/2, “The Mischiefs of the Town Quarters,” 20 September 1703.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Neufeld and Blaine Wickham, “The State, the People and the Care of Sick and Injured Sailors in Late Stuart England,” *Social History of Medicine* 28, no. 1 (2015): 45–63; Alexandra Shepard,

disciplined care and cure underlay efforts to modernize the Royal Navy's sick and wounded service after 1689.

By 1691, it was clear to the Admiralty that the existing method of caring for sick and wounded men hemorrhaged countless sailors from active duty. Following a special summit of flag officers at Chatham, the Admiralty introduced a policy intended to stop men who were set ashore sick or wounded from abandoning the service. The policy hinged on a paper technology that regulated navy seamen by monitoring their putative compensation: ships' pay-books. The Admiralty ordered paymasters to mark "a Query on the Ships Books against each Man's name that shall be sett on Shore Sick or Hurt, for the stopping of their Wages until they shall return to their own or bring Certificates of their Entry on board some other of their Majesties Ships."<sup>25</sup> So long as a "Q" stood next to a man's name in his ship's pay-book, he would not receive a wage ticket that normally was exchanged for cash at the Navy Office in London or at a discount with a navy agent or entrepreneurial ticket buyer.<sup>26</sup> The Admiralty ordered captains to correspond with the commission for sick and wounded seamen, which administered naval health care, so that officials would know who was set down where and when, and also when those same people were well enough to return to the service. Not surprisingly, for the duration of the war and subsequently, there were complaints that commanders did not always maintain correspondence with the sick-and-wounded commissioners as to the whereabouts of their men.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, seamen sent ashore who then failed to report back to their original vessels in less than thirty days—sometimes because they were transferred to hospitals in London, or were pressed from sick quarters onto other ships, or simply had not yet recovered—risked having Rs, meaning run or deserted, set next to their names in their ships' pay-books.<sup>28</sup> To be marked as "Run" meant that the sailor forfeited all his pay on all the naval vessels on which he had served before and after his illness or injury. This designation was potentially a catastrophic sanction against seamen, who often went for very long periods without any pay, especially if they had been pressed from one ship returning to port onto another ship just leaving it—a much-despised practice known as "turning over." In the meantime, the seaman and especially his dependents could accumulate crippling debts. Thus, the lives of many hundreds of seamen's wives, partners, and children, as well as those of local merchants who extended them credit, were often under

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"From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500–1700," *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 2005): 281–95, at 289.

<sup>25</sup> TNA, ADM 1/3588, Navy Board report to Admiralty on G. Richardson and J. Dennis petitions viz Qs and Rs, 24 January 1700; TNA, ADM 106/486/15, G. Clement to Navy Board, 6 July 1696; England and Wales, Royal Navy, *Rules and Directions . . . in Order to the returning to their Majesties Service such Men as shall be put on Shore, Sick or Hurt, from their Majesties Ships* (21 March 1691), 2, BrBsides Bv6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Wilcox, "The 'Mystery and Business' of Navy Agents," *International Journal of Maritime History* 23, no. 2 (December 2011): 41–68.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, ADM 2/171, Admiralty to Navy Board, 21 March 1691; TNA, ADM 106/486/234 and 235, Thomas Gibb to Navy Board, January 1696; TNA, ADM 3/15, Admiralty Meeting Minutes, 25 January 1700.

<sup>28</sup> TNA, ADM 106/485/262, William Hasby to Navy Board, April 1696.

severe strain for a long time.<sup>29</sup> The Qs and Rs cheated many unfortunate sailors and their families of sustenance.<sup>30</sup>

As early as the winter of 1695, complaints about the many seamen (and their families) suffering from the Qs and Rs entered the stream of print-based lobbying raining down on parliamentarians.<sup>31</sup> For example, William Hodges, a London-based wage-ticket purchaser, directed his frustration for losing money on dead or run sailors at the navy's Qs and Rs. In two pamphlets submitted to Parliament in 1695, Hodges suggested that the Q and R policy was a discouragement to seamen joining the navy and, indeed, a probable cause of illness among sailors. "That fatal Misery of above an Hundred Thousand Seamen sick, this War," Hodges declared in *Great Britain's groans*, "may owe its birth half of it unto the two first mentioned Parents," the Qs and Rs. And, he asked pointedly, "if Men are turn'd from ship to ship until they are sick and then set on Shoar for cure and there dye, and be then Qd or Rd out of their Pay, how in this case can it be safe, to be in the service of the Nation for time to come?"<sup>32</sup> Were the navy to return to the old method of demobilizing and paying seamen annually, Hodges argued, this would allow them to "recover their Healths, and then they [would] be encouraged to come into the Service again."<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, heavy doses of self-interest crosscut William Hodges's stated concern for suffering sailors and the navy's manning problem, but his complaints were echoed by other quasi-professional polemicists, including Robert Crosfeild, who launched a series of complaints to Parliament about corruption during the Nine Years' War. When Crosfeild denounced the navy's administration, he alleged that the Qs and Rs permitted wicked ships' paymasters and clerks to hold back sailors' pay, causing immeasurable hardship to them and to their dependents. An unscrupulous paymaster or clerk could, for example, mark a Q or R next to a sailor's name and then pocket his pay while the man languished in an alehouse. Like Hodges, Crosfeild argued that the policy was a key reason for the navy's ongoing manning problem. "The Sailors being inhumanely and barbarously treated," he asserted, "is the only true cause why they so much decline in the public service ... By all which it is plain, that whatever good Laws may be made for the Increase and Encouragement of Seamen, will prove ineffectual so long as these practices continue."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, John Dennis, a minor literary figure and agent for seamen's wives, asked directly in a petition to Parliament, "how

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Hunt, "Women and the Fiscal-Imperial State in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire*, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge, 2004), 29–47.

<sup>30</sup> Ehrman, *Navy in the War*, 128.

<sup>31</sup> Julian Hoppit, "Patterns of Parliamentary Legislation, 1660–1800," *Historical Journal* 39, no. 1 (March 1996): 109–31; Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford, 2005), 109–14.

<sup>32</sup> William Hodges, *An humble representation of the seamens misery*, Wing H2331 (1695); TNA, ADM 3/11, 25 March and 3 April 1695; William Hodges, *Great Britain's groans: or, An account of the oppression, ruin and destruction of the loyal seamen*, Wing H2327 (1695), 24, 3, 7.

<sup>33</sup> William Hodges, *Humble proposals for the relief, encouragement ... of loyal, couragious seamen*, Wing H2329 (1695, dated 1696 February), 15, 20.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Crosfeild, *Justice perverted, and innocence & loyalty oppressed*, Wing C7245 (1695), 16. For Crosfeild's career, see Mark Knights, "Parliament, Print and Corruption in Later Stuart Britain," *Parliamentary History* 26, no. 1 (February 2007): 49–61.

consistent it is with the Constitution of this Government, the inviolable laws of this realm, the credit of His Majesty's Service, or the Encouragement of seamen," to withhold formerly sick or injured servicemen's pay.<sup>35</sup> Another petitioner stated plainly that raising navy sailors' wages would "prevent them from Deserting His Majesty's Service and in great measure stop for the future Clamours that have been made by the Qs and Rs."<sup>36</sup> A policy introduced to keep men from fleeing the navy was in fact stopping them from enlisting and provoking public protest from naval servicemen and their supporters.

Although English seamen had a tradition of representing their views to their betters on a range of subjects dating back at least to the outbreak of the Civil War, the volume of seamen's complaints aimed at Parliament during and immediately after the Nine Years' War was unprecedented.<sup>37</sup> Hundreds of sailors had petitioned the Privy Council to take off the Qs and Rs as early as the winter of 1695. Seamen began lobbying Parliament against the Qs and Rs in the spring of 1699, probably out of frustration with the slow pace with which the Admiralty was handling petitions to remove them. Parliament received at least eight petitions against the Qs and Rs in 1699 and 1700 and another seven tracts that spoke to the policy.<sup>38</sup> The navy's method of managing its sick and injured men became as never before a notable topic of public discourse.

Protesting sailors and polemicists tried to convince Parliament that the navy's Qs and Rs were unjust and a discouragement to service in the Fleet. The House of Lords

<sup>35</sup> John Dennis, *The seamens case with respect [sic] to their service in the navy*, Wing D1043 [1698/1699], 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Reasons off'ed to the Honourable House of Commons for a clause to encourage seamen*, BL Printed, 816.m7.74 [1699].

<sup>37</sup> *The general remonstrance or declaration of the sea-men*, Wing G508 (1642); *The seamans protestation*, Wing S2191 (1642); *To the Commons assembled in Parliament: the petition of the mariners*, BL Printed, 816.m.148 (1642); *The humble petition of the young-men, apprentices, and sea-men*, Wing T1638 (1642); *Humble tender and declaration of many well-affected mariners... of the Trinity House*, BL, Thomason Tracts 669, fol. 12[51] (1648); *A declaration and remonstrances of the sea-men and mariners*, Wing D549 (1653); *To his Highness ... the humble petition of the sea-men*, Wing T1369 (1654).

<sup>38</sup> TNA, ADM 3/11, Admiralty Meeting Minutes, 19 February 1695; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. 14, 1685–1691 (hereafter LJ 14), (Burlington, ON, 2012–15), 450, 454; John Dennis submitted a complaint about the Qs and Rs to the Admiralty in February 1699, 22 January 1700, SER/84/25, NMM; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *House of Lords Manuscripts*, n.s. (hereafter HoL MSS, n.s.), 3:423; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. 16, 1696–1701 (hereafter LJ 16), 450, 454, 25 April 1699; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 13, 1699–1702 (hereafter CJ 13), (Burlington, ON, 2011–15), 72, 18 December 1699; CJ 13:124, 16 January 1700; John Dennis, *The seamens case with respect to their service in the navy*, Wing D1043 (1698/1699); William Hodges, *Ruin to ruin, after misery to misery*, Wing H2332 (1699/1700); John Dennis, *Some reasons humbly offered to the Honourable House of Commons, to hear the petitioner John Dennis, when the report of Q's and R's shall be read*, Wing D1044 (1699/1700); G. B., *The case of several thousands ... mariners in the English Navy ... kept out of their pay upon the account of Q's and R's*, Wing C988A (1699); *Some Further Reasons Humbly Offered ... For Taking Off the Qs and Rs*, Wing S4507B (1699); William Eccles, *Reasons for taking off the Q—s and R—s*, Wing E131 (1700); TNA, ADM 1/3588, Petition to House of Commons from Weymouth and Melcomb Regis, Dorset, 23 January 1700; CJ 13:137; Seamen's Widows' Petition to the House of Commons, CJ 13:163, 1 February 1700; John Tutchin, *Remarks on the present condition of the Navy*, Wing R935 (1700); idem, *Observations on a pamphlet touching the present condition of the navy and victualling ... and on what he writes touching Q's and R's*, Wing O101 (London, 1700); idem, *Remarks upon the navy. The second part*, Wing R949A (London, 1700); John Dennis, *An essay on the navy* (London, 1702); Peter Rowe, *A true method, I. For raising souldiers. II. For bringing those seamen that are in the land, into the Navy* (London, 1703); *The old and true way of manning the fleet* (London, 1707).



received a petition from “Thousands of seamen, widows and fatherless children,” complaining that the seamen were “deprived of their pay which they had earned at the hazard of their lives, and never deserted the service but entered themselves on board other ships voluntarily.” In December 1699, George Richardson complained to the House of Commons on behalf of several thousand mariners against the navy’s unfairness toward “the Petitioners [who] served in the navy many Years, but are kept out of the Pay, upon the Pretence of Qs and Rs being set upon their names in the Navy Books.” William Eccles promised to the Commons that taking off the Qs would be an “Encouragement for all Saylor, Encouragement for all Persons to trust them, when in Necessity, and will be for the Honour and Credit, of the Nation.”<sup>39</sup> William Hodges again denounced the policy as unjust, unreasonable, and a discouragement to sailors joining the navy:

[S]ome Rational Rules [should be] laid down and ordered that [sailors] may in case of Sickness or Lameness have their Pay secured, [for] how any man can ever for time to come be safe in serving at that dreadful uncertain rate of Management, since they are no more certain of their Health and Strength and Life, than the Beasts of the Field.<sup>40</sup>

Another pamphleteer, who might have been Rev. George Burghope—a client of John Egerton, earl of Bridgewater and first lord of Admiralty (May 1699 to April 1701)—called the Q and R policy “Barbarous and Inhumane.” G. B. declared that it is “a very hard Case, that a Sailor must lose his Money because he has lost his Health in the Service.” Nor was it rational, he argued, to punish seamen who had been reluctant to return to unhealthy ships. How could the navy expect “that such as have contracted Indispositions and Distempers, by unwholesome Provision or a contagious Air, should after a Months Refreshment in Sick Quarters, or laboring 6 to 12 months under their Maladies in a Hospital, be got to return aboard Ship ... disease being more dreadful to sailors than battle or storm.” In 1702, as the nation prepared for another war against France, John Dennis re-emphasized his claim that the navy’s Qs not only unjustly punished the sick and their dependents, but also, along with poor pay, discouraged sailors from enlisting. The consequent “great Disgust to our Seamen,” Dennis argued, was “the only Occasion of putting the Government to that inconvenient, delatory, troublesome, and chargeable Method of Impressing.”<sup>41</sup> Penalizing sick sailors with Qs and Rs, in this view, made even more probable the expense and aggravation of pressing healthy men into the navy.

There were, therefore, principled and practical reasons to attack the Royal Navy’s Qs and Rs policy: it unjustly harmed a valuable but vulnerable section of the nation and so discouraged them from coming forward to its defense. Some critiques of the policy, unsurprisingly, were partisan assaults on the Whig grandees running the Royal Navy during the 1690s. For example, John Tutchin, a veteran of Monmouth’s rebellion, was a fierce critic of Junto Whig Admiral Edward Russell (Earl of Orford from

<sup>39</sup> HoL MSS, n.s., 3:423, 25 April 1699; Petition from George Richardson “and several Thousand Mariners belonging to His Majesty’s navy” against the Q and R, *CJ* 13:72, 18 December 1699; Eccles, *Reasons for taking off*.

<sup>40</sup> Hodges, *Ruin to ruin*, 25–26.

<sup>41</sup> G. B., *The case of several thousands ... mariners*, n.p.; Dennis, *Essay on the navy*, 7, 16, 30.

May 1697) and of what Tutchin perceived to be a naval administration awash with corrupt officials. It was perhaps an understandable view for someone recently dismissed from the Victualling Board after nine years of service.<sup>42</sup> Tutchin cited the Qs and Rs as yet one more example of Navy Board mismanagement keeping the long-suffering seamen from their desserts. He was also a strong opponent of impressment, claiming that the practice was contrary to Magna Carta: “To say we are a free people when any of us is in effectual slavery is Nonsense; for the same Power that deprives part of the People of their Liberty, may deprive the whole People.” Seafarers themselves also questioned in at least one petition to the Commons the legitimacy of the crown’s power over sick and injured sailors’ livelihoods. “We cannot find in any of your Acts,” a group of sailors submitted, “the Commissioners of the Navy empowered to stop our Wages, under pretence of Qs and Rs. We believe our selves to be *English Men*, entitled to our Franchises and free Birthrights.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the last printed critique of the Qs and Rs appeared in a radical Whig tract that condemned both the policy and impressment as contrary to the ancient constitution. Since the Revolution, the author of *The Old and True Way of Manning the Fleet* claimed, some naval officers had assumed a “Sovereign power, by making such laws concerning the seamen as are contrary to the Magna Carta” and “making them lose their Pay, under pretence of Queries and Runs, without due Course of Law, or by the verdict of a Jury.”<sup>44</sup> The polemicist suggested that “Revolutioners” such as Orford who had retained “those Abuses introduced into the management of our Fleet since the Restoration,” and who later had implemented unjust and illegitimate policies, should not have been surprised by the politicization of manning the navy and the clamors of seamen and their families.<sup>45</sup>

At first, the Admiralty and then parliamentarians essentially brushed off complaints about the Qs and Rs. On the final day of the spring 1699 parliamentary session, the Admiralty, then still mostly a Whig board, insisted to the House of Lords that, in cases where there was some doubt as to whether or not a Q was unjustly placed next to a seaman’s name, the burden of proof fell on him to show that he had in fact re-entered his ship or another naval vessel upon cure. Indeed, to get their Qs or Rs removed, petitioning seamen had been ordered to demonstrate to the Admiralty and the Navy Board’s satisfaction such facts as, for example, their whereabouts on particular dates or that they were truly in prison when they claimed they were, that they had leave to be on shore as stated, or in one case that he had truly broken a leg. The Admiralty had been reviewing petitions from seamen to have their Qs or Rs removed since November 1698, claiming that no less than 750 of the 1,700 petitioners had Qs or Rs taken off.<sup>46</sup> However, within days of this pronouncement, Orford resigned from the Admiralty under increasing pressure from anti-Junto elements in the Commons; soon four other commissioners

<sup>42</sup> CJ 13:788, 15 April 1697.

<sup>43</sup> Tutchin, *Remarks upon the navy*, sig. A2v, 20; idem, *Remarks upon the navy. The second part*, 28–30; *Some further reasons humbly offered by the sailors to the consideration of the Honourable House of Commons for taking off the Qs and Rs*, BL Printed, 816.m7.83 (1699).

<sup>44</sup> *Old and true way*, 17.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 28–29.

<sup>46</sup> TNA, ADM 2/179, fols. 162, 182, 234, 260, Admiralty to Navy Board, January to May 1699; LJ 16:462–63, 4 May 1699.

were purged. By July 1699, the reconstituted Admiralty decided to return responsibility for the seamen's petitions for pay back to the Navy Board.<sup>47</sup>

During the following parliamentary session, the Admiralty (and the Navy Board) defended the Q and R policy as necessary to preserving the discipline of the service—the whole idea of the Qs was to oblige men who had been set ashore sick to report back for duty upon recovery. Moreover, a blanket lifting of the Qs would, the Navy Board supposed, “ease this Office of the clamorous and troublesome business that belong to it,” while at the same time adding a considerable sum of money to the already enormous navy debt. The Navy Board also blamed Parliament for forcing the Admiralty to introduce the Qs. The old system of paying seamen at the end of each year was not possible during the 1690s because Parliament had not voted enough money for the Fleet.<sup>48</sup> What the Navy Board did not mention, however, was that when it had money there was usually no rush to reward the sailors. The contractors' bills, which accrued interest, were paid first and the seamen's wages last.<sup>49</sup> An anonymous pamphlet, probably composed by a naval official, likewise claimed that stopping the pay of sick and injured seamen had been necessary during the recent war “for the Security of [the country's] Religion and Liberties.” Without the Qs the “walls of our Country” would have been “slenderly mann'd.” According to this tract, seamen suffered not because the navy stopped their pay while they were sick but rather from “these bloodsuckers ... who trust the poor sailors at more than 50% Profit [and] that industriously spread abroad the Injuries done by these Qs and Rs.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, the very agents—such as Hodges and Dennis—taking up the seamen's cause before Parliament were, in this view, the true cause of seafarers' financial miseries. Thus, the navy's advocates acknowledged that sailors as a group were indispensable to the state, but in the absence of some form of discipline over their bodies, whether sick or healthy, they could not be trusted to serve its interest as needed.

The debate about Qs and Rs was a public response to a primitive attempt at biopolitics. Early in the Nine Years' War, the Admiralty introduced the Q policy to solve a potentially crippling resource crisis: to stop an uncontrolled bleeding of men and treasure, which the loosely supervised system of onshore casualty care, which was very dependent upon female labor, facilitated. The Admiralty's use of its pay books to stop sick and injured seamen from deserting with the threat of penury was intrinsically linked to the problem of finding and keeping sufficient manpower for the navy. The Qs and Rs were about numbers of men and amounts of pay—ideally managed by clerks on ships, in the sick-and-wounded office, and in the Navy Office. The Qs and Rs were *police* in action: an administrative technique designed to keep the bodies of seamen within the navy's control while they were temporary dis-abled from

<sup>47</sup> David Aldridge, “Admiral Edward Russell, Pre- and Post-Barfleur,” in *Guerres Maritimes, 1688–1713: IVes Journées Franco-Britanniques; Histoire de la Marine, Portsmouth 1er–4 Avril 1992*, ed. Service Historique de la Marine (Vincennes, 1996): 155–71, at 157; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 183–85; TNA, ADM 2/180, Admiralty to Navy Board, 21 July 1699.

<sup>48</sup> TNA, ADM 1/3588, Navy Board report to the Admiralty on G. Richardson and J. Dennis petitions against Qs and Rs, 24 January 1700; *CJ* 13:164–65, 1 February 1700; Bernard Pool, *Navy Board Contracts, 1660–1832: Contract Administration under the Navy Board* (London, 1969), 46; D. W. Jones, *War and Economy in the Age of William III and Marlborough* (Oxford, 1988), 11, 20–24.

<sup>49</sup> Ehrman, *Navy in the War*, 132, 489–90.

<sup>50</sup> *Observations on a pamphlet touching the present condition of the navy and victualling*, 16, 12.

serving. The policy remained in place at the start of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1702, but it did not generate nearly the same level of protest or comment as it previously had. This was probably due to a combination of factors, including a greater reliance on privately contracted hospitals on shore, which was supposed to make deserting more difficult; better communication between ships' captains and the navy's commission for sick and wounded concerning the whereabouts of seamen; and the fact that at least some commanders simply ignored the policy.<sup>51</sup>

The controversy over the Qs and Rs is nonetheless significant as generating a noteworthy biopolitical dialectic within England. The Admiralty introduced a new administrative technique, which envisioned the careful, steady recording of data about where sick and injured seamen were and for how long. The Qs and Rs promised to restore order to the disorders of a loosely organized system of health care. What the policy provoked, in fact, were open opposition and the first public debate in England about how the fiscal-naval state managed a population of temporary but crucially important servants.

### BRINGING IN THE BODIES: THE REGISTER OF SEAMEN

There was a well-established economic and political literature about the multitude of English seamen by the time lobbyists such as William Hodges and Robert Crosfeild publicly protested that the Qs diminished the number of seafarers at the navy's disposal.<sup>52</sup> Early Stuart mercantilists pointed out that the growing commerce with India, and the Newfoundland fishery, demanded more labor, which encouraged more men to go to sea. The rise in the number of merchant mariners would ultimately help the nation's navy.<sup>53</sup> Others argued for a national policy to increase the stock of sailors. For example, William Petty's *Political Arithmetick*, written in the 1670s and first published in 1690, contained a proposal for bringing 6,000 tradesmen into the sea services over a period of four years so that the merchant marine and the navy would have 36,000 seamen each.<sup>54</sup> Five years later, Francis Brewster complained that the war with France had "damaged trade by eating up seamen." The solution that he suggested echoed earlier commercialist writers in calling for an increase in trade. Brewster believed that the root of the problem of manning both the navy and the merchant marine was that England did not have enough sailors to meet the demands of both, especially in wartime. Other commentators

<sup>51</sup> Admiralty to Sick and Wounded, 3 June 1703, ADM/E/1, NMM; Admiralty to Sick and Wounded, 16 November 1703, ADM/E/1, NMM; TNA, ADM 1/3604, Navy Board to Admiralty, 14 February 1706; Johnston, "Parliament and the Navy," 456–57; Kathleen Harland, "The Establishment and Administration of the First Hospitals in the Royal Navy," (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2003), 172–87.

<sup>52</sup> G. V. Scammell, "Manning the English Merchant Service in the Sixteenth Century," *Mariner's Mirror* 56, no. 2 (May 1970): 131–54, at 135; McCormick, "Population," 28.

<sup>53</sup> Sir Dudley Digges, *The defence of trade*, STC 6845 (1615), 6, 11, 32; Thomas Mun, *A discourse of trade, from England unto the East Indies*, STC 18256 (1621), 33, 36; Edward Misselden, *Free trade, or, The meanes to make trade flourish*, STC 17986 (1622), sig. A3v, 35, 75–76; Gerard Malynes, *The maintenance of free trade*, STC 17226 (1622), 29, 42; Henry Robinson, *England's safety, in trades encrease*, Wing R1671 (1641), 13.

<sup>54</sup> William Petty, *Political arithmetik, or, A discourse concerning, the extent and value of lands, people, build-ings; husbandry, manufacture, commerce, fishery, artizans, seamen, soldiers ...*, Wing P1932 (1690), 48–49.

argued that what England really needed was not more sailors—there were enough already—but rather a more rational system of manning the navy, one based on the certainty of numbers, along with a better complement of inducements or encouragements. Thankfully, an example of just such a scheme, an “exact registry” of all seamen, lay just across the Channel.<sup>55</sup>

The French *Inscription Maritime* was arguably “the most remarkable administrative innovation” of the late-seventeenth century, the first “modern system of conscription” that continued to function at least until the Napoleonic wars. Local officials registered sailors into different classes, which during wartime rotated into *la Marine* every four or three years for twelve months’ service.<sup>56</sup> This method did not enable the French navy to find and deploy many more sailors than the Royal Navy, despite France’s much larger population. The *Inscription Maritime* also could not overcome manpower losses from desertion or capture by enemy forces, factors that proved devastating to *la Marine* during the 1750s.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, at a war’s outbreak the French navy was manned much faster and with less trouble than the Royal Navy.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, during the early stages of the Nine Years’ War, Parliament had considered but rejected a similar system. Soon thereafter, a member of the Navy Board who had seen the *Inscription Maritime* in action while a prisoner of war sparked a public debate over the Royal Navy’s manning method with a tract addressed to Parliament entitled *England’s Safety*.<sup>59</sup>

Manning the navy through a national register of seamen was initially promoted as an orderly way to solve the manpower shortage, with the additional benefit of fostering greater social order. George St. Lo argued that a general register of all seamen, modeled on the *Inscription Maritime*, was a better way of raising qualified seamen than forcing men, especially “Raw Landsmen and persons never at Sea,” into the navy through impressment. He also raised the issue of the sailors’ welfare, proposing that the navy introduce “a constant Provision for all such as shall be wounded in service against the enemy” as an encouragement for men to register. A register supported by Parliament was, he thought, a “sure method for raising qualified seamen,” which would also present communities with the opportunity to rid themselves of poachers, beggars, and vagrants.<sup>60</sup> Thus, compulsory registration and service in the navy would transmute socially burdensome and disorderly multitudes into useful public servants. Another proponent of a compulsory general register of

<sup>55</sup> Sir Francis Brewster, *Essays on trade and navigation*, Wing B4434 (1695), 4, 83–84; *Propositions for Gaining and Encouraging Seamen in His Majesty’s Service*, 2–3; “Proposal for Manning the Fleet,” [1690?], ADL/J/5, NMM.

<sup>56</sup> J. S. Bromley and A. N. Ryan, “Navies,” in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 6, *The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1688–1715/25*, ed. J. S. Bromley (Cambridge, 1971): 790–833, at 820.

<sup>57</sup> T. J. A. Le Goff, “Problèmes de recrutement de la marine française pendant la Guerre Sept Ans,” *Revue Historique* 283, no. 2 (April–June 1990): 205–33.

<sup>58</sup> Geoffrey Symcox, *The Crisis of French Sea Power, 1688–1697: From the Guerre d’Escadre to the Guerre de Course* (The Hague, 1974), 15; Daniel Dessert, *La Royale: Vaisseaux et Marins du Roi-Soleil* (Paris, 1996), 217–18; Gillian Hughes, “The Act for the Increase and Encouragement of Seamen, 1696–1710. Could it have solved the Royal Navy’s Manning Problem?” in *Guerres Maritimes, 1688–1714*, ed. P. Le Fevre (Vincennes, 1996), 25–33.

<sup>59</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 10, 1688–1693 (hereafter CJ 10), 442, 542, 635, 731, 734, 735; George St. Lo, *England’s interest: or, A discipline for seamen*, Wing S340 (1694), 29.

<sup>60</sup> George St. Lo, *England’s safety, or A bridle to the French king. Proposing a sure method for encouraging navigation, and raising qualified seamen*, Wing S341 (1693), sig. A2, 27, 35; idem, *England’s interest*, 40.

seamen, John Perry, claimed that under such a method “the liberty of the subject would be no more infringed than it is already, and a grievous penalty would be removed.” This assertion was true, because under “the power of the Press there is oft made no distinction (for seamen cannot be known by their Faces) but Landsmen as well as Seamen are hurried away to the great detriment of many.”<sup>61</sup> An anonymous paper submitted to Admiralty Commissioner Richard Rich proposed that the officials from county hundreds choose one or two men, seamen or landsmen, for service in the Royal Navy: “neither old men nor boyes, nor lame, nor blind, between twenty and thirty-six years old.” Such a scheme would, the author argued, “create a number of seamen and those able and good,” truly “the best seamen in the world,” of whom 12,000 would voluntarily register to serve their country.<sup>62</sup>

Robert Crosfeild, by contrast, was opposed to impressment on principled grounds, and unlike St. Lo, Crosfeild saw the navy’s manning problem as an opportunity not for social cleansing but for promoting the welfare of maritime workers. Crosfeild proposed that Parliament create a pension scheme for both merchant mariners and navy seafarers and their dependents, a scheme that “would plainly be an inducement to many thousands of People to take to the Sea, who are now afraid of it, in fear of losing their limbs and becoming Vagabonds.” He suggested that a tax on trade would pay for the pensions and that “in a little time there might be very good hospitals built in all the considerable Ports of the Kingdom to the great relief of the Poor and to the Interest and Honour of the Nation.”<sup>63</sup> A compulsory national register of seafarers and generous state-sponsored health and welfare provision, along with plans forcibly to transform the poor and marginalized but otherwise able-bodied into able seamen, were thus key elements of the policies proposed by first-wave naval biopoliticians.

Both St. Lo and Crosfeild believed that England already possessed enough mariners for the navy and the merchant marine.<sup>64</sup> At least one commentator disagreed publicly, albeit anonymously. The author of *Proposals to Encrease Seamen for the Service and Defence of England* argued in near-natalist terms that “nothing but a Project to Breed Seamen, well Executed, will make this Nation Glorious upon the Sea.” Moreover, the chief problem with impressment, according to this tract, was that it made able-bodied sailors sick. “The Infirmities that have attended our Fleet these 3 or 4 years,” he declared, “have arose from the Nastiness of the many Landmen,” most of whom “cannot forbear Vomiting, nor have the command of their Legs to go upon the Deck and do it over the Gunnel of the Ship, but empty themselves every way ... to the great Annoyance of all the rest of the Crew, who are hereby exposed to so many Diseases.” The author’s proposed “remedies” for the lack of able-bodied seamen included allowing watermen to take two apprentices

<sup>61</sup> John Perry, *A regulation for seamen wherein a method is humbly proposed: whereby their majesties fleet may at all times be speedily and effectually mann’d*, Wing P1649 (1695), 25–26.

<sup>62</sup> “Proposals for manning a squadron of ships, or the whole royal navy,” n.d., Rich Papers, X. d. 451 (97), FSL.

<sup>63</sup> R. Crosfeild, *England’s glory reviv’d, demonstrated in several propositions*, Wing C7243 (1693), sig. C2r, 7, 15.

<sup>64</sup> George St. Lo, *To [the] Parliament ... for bringing down ... the rates of seamen’s wages*, BL Printed, 816.m7.51 (1694); Crosfeild, *England’s Glory*, sig. D3r.

instead of one and forcing colliers' boats to take one landsman on board for every dozen cauldrons of coal they transported.<sup>65</sup> Here again, landsmen would be transmuted via policy and, through time and training, into seamen.

As its proponents projected, a register of seamen was a quantitative technology that would allow the state to monitor and direct its seafaring multitude onto warships in an orderly and hence healthy manner. Embittered former shipwright George Everett observed that the present method, forcing men on board the king's ships "in a poor and ragged Condition," was "one main Occasion of Sickness and Distempers on board the Fleet; and for such Reasons many refuse to go to Sea." A national register of all seafarers aged sixteen to sixty, which Everett called "civil impressment," would enable the navy "to know who is in Service and who is not," so that at any time the navy "may be ready manned with able Seamen, and no Hiding Place left for Deserters or others."<sup>66</sup> To the advocates of a register of seamen, knowing how many sailors' bodies there were, and where they were, was to be the ground of orderly, efficient, and salubrious naval manpower management.<sup>67</sup>

Everett asserted that his project for a general register of seamen had the "especiall Approbation of Honourable Admiral *Russell* and several other eminent Persons of known Experience in Maritime Affairs."<sup>68</sup> Whether or not the great Whig admiral deigned to give his imprimatur to Everett's plan, from as early as 1692, Williamite governments were keenly aware that the fleet's tremendous expansion, combined with huge losses of men due to sickness, injury, and desertion, presented the Royal Navy with an unprecedented manpower problem. Although naval manning strictly speaking was an executive brief under the Admiralty, government figures including William III clearly wanted Parliament to get involved, despite skepticism that the legislature would never give the navy the necessary tools to better man the fleet.<sup>69</sup> The regime was prepared to consider seriously adopting a new manning method, including a register of seamen, despite doubts within officialdom that the traditional measures were really in crisis.<sup>70</sup> As late as December 1694, the Navy Board told the Admiralty that the old method of encouraging some men and pressing others, "vigorously put in practice again, with good usage of the seamen, good payment of wages, a known Provision settled for the relief of the sick and wounded," should procure as previously the requisite manpower for the Fleet. Addressing the Admiralty in April 1695 from Cadiz, Russell disagreed. The fact that seamen were slow to enter the service, "cannot otherwise be expected," he wrote, "unlesse the Parliament will resolve upon a Method to have that Service more effectually performed."<sup>71</sup> Elements of the Junto Whig ministry, including Russell, were evidently prepared to transpose

<sup>65</sup> *Proposals to encrease seamen for the service and defence of England*, Wing P3769D (1694).

<sup>66</sup> George Everett, *Encouragement for seamen and mariners*, Wing E3546 (1695), 12, 19, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Perry, *Regulation*, sig. B2. Cf. *Propositions for gaining and encouraging sea-men in his Majesty's service*, Wing P3779A [1689], 2.

<sup>68</sup> Everett, *Encouragement*, 8.

<sup>69</sup> See Pepys's jaundiced comments, c. December 1692–January 1693, in *Samuel Pepys's Naval Minutes*, ed. J. R. Tanner (London, 1926), 267–68. See also *CJ* 10:735.

<sup>70</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 11, 1693–1697 (hereafter *CJ* 11), 171, 12 November 1694; TNA, T1/134, Admiralty Secretary Bridgeman to Treasury Secretary Lowndes, 16 August 1695; TNA, ADM 3/12, Admiralty Meeting Minutes, 15 September 1695.

<sup>71</sup> TNA, ADM 1/3573, Navy Board to Admiralty, 3 December 1694; Edward Russell to Admiralty, 18 April 1695, Landsdowne MS 1152B, fol. 272, British Library.

what should have been an administrative problem—manning the navy—into a political question.

The new method for manning the Fleet that Parliament eventually approved met the approbation of Junto Whigs wedded to the ministry and to Country-minded members wary of enhanced state power: there was to be a register of seamen but not a compulsory one as the biopolitical polemicists demanded in print. In the spring of 1695, a bill for a register of seamen again found insufficient support. That summer, however, the press became increasingly unpopular. In the autumn, both the Privy Council and the Admiralty again got behind the idea of a register, with the king's throne speech calling for "some good Bill for the Encouragement and Increase of Seamen."<sup>72</sup> Two members, Richard Onslow and Sir Rowland Gwynne, who were acceptable both to Whigs linked to the ministry and country-minded men in the Commons, introduced another bill "for the encouragement of seamen" at the end of the year. That bill, with its emphasis on encouragements and rewards, both short- and long-term, passed both Houses in March 1696. Against the advice of the Navy Board, the Act for the Increase and Encouragement of Seamen, commonly called the Register Bill, promised a 40s bounty to men who signed up.<sup>73</sup> Crucially, enrollment was voluntary. Seamen's wives could be assigned two months of their husbands' pay. Disabled registered seamen were to get priority admission to the recently founded Greenwich Hospital but not before contributing 6d per month from their wages to support the construction and then upkeep of the palatial tribute to Williamite benevolence.<sup>74</sup>

### COUNTING UP BODIES IN WAR AND PEACE: THE SEAMEN'S REGISTER IN ACTION

The seamen's register operated under the oversight of between two and four commissioners for three and a half years. Although the commissioners had their own staff, it was Customs officials at key ports who performed the crucial work of tracking down ships, registering men, and collecting sailors' contributions to Greenwich hospital.<sup>75</sup> The record suggests that the job of registering men was not simple. Some sailors evidently used the scheme not for their welfare but to avoid naval service altogether. For example, in January 1697, a seaman from the *Constant* produced one

<sup>72</sup> *CJ* 11:264, 274, 293, 296, 303, 305; Johnston, "Parliament and the Navy," 353; *CJ* 11:339, 26 November 1695; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry*, vol. 2, *The Shrewsbury Papers* (London, 1889), 274–75, 289–91; Henry Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III* (Manchester, 1977), 161, 207.

<sup>73</sup> *CJ* 11:373, 380, 387; "Richard Onslow (1654–1717)" in *History of Parliament, The House of Commons, 1690–1715*, ed. D. W. Hayton (New York, 2002), 5:25–27; "Sir Rowland Gwynne (1659–1726)" in *History of Parliament, The House of Commons, 1690–1715*, ed. D. W. Hayton (New York, 2002), 4:142; *CJ* 11:488; *LJ* 14:720; Navy Board to Admiralty, 24 January 1696, SER/102, 275–78, NMM.

<sup>74</sup> 7–8 William III, cap. xxi, "Register Bill," *Statutes of the Realm* (hereafter *SR*), 7:98–102, 10 April 1696; Christine Stevenson, "From Palace to Hut: The Architecture of Military and Naval Medicine," in *British Military and Naval Medicine: 1600–1830*, ed. Geoffrey L. Hudson (New York, 2007), 227–51

<sup>75</sup> TNA, ADM 1/3997, Register Office Letters to Admiralty; TNA, ADM 105/41, Register Office Meeting Minutes; Admiralty Board Instructions to the Commissioners of the Seamen's Register, 3 September 1696, CAD/B/10, NMM.



Peter Moor's Certificate of Registration, which the man confessed under questioning to have procured from the real Moor while lying sick on shore at Gosport. The impersonator hoped that the Certificate would save him having to rejoin the *Constant*. Other sailors who did take the Register seriously were later disappointed at what it did not do; registration did not, despite the views of the commissioners, protect registered seamen from being turned over from ships entering port to ships leaving port.<sup>76</sup> Captain Robinson of the *Hampton Court* reported from Portsmouth that he had registered fifty men, and could have registered many more, but the "men who had given in their names to be Registered who were turned over say 'they'll be damned before they will be Register'd,' and others that is Registered swears they'll burn their Certificates." Representatives of forty registered seamen turned over from the *Norfolk* to the *Bonadventure* wrote the commissioners promising to return their certificates and to "send to the parlement and see if they will rite us for this is contrary to the act of parlement."<sup>77</sup> The fact that the registry system struck others as intrinsically unfair cannot have helped. For example, Royal Watermen were exempt, and occasionally, as was alleged by Thames watermen, called registered seamen "slavish Doggs with diverse other reproachful words not only to the great discouragement of them but they preventing others to Register themselves."<sup>78</sup> Early on, the register office undoubtedly experienced growing pains in gaining the trust of sailors.

Nevertheless, despite problems of fraud and exasperated seamen, neither the navy nor Parliament was prepared to jettison the registry office as King William's war wound down. In the spring of 1697, on the advice of the commissioners and the Admiralty, Parliament amended the Act for Increase and Encouragement to make registration easier and to enhance the inducements to sign up. For example, disabled seamen would be permitted to apply to Greenwich Hospital in the order of their registration, and the number of certificates from a JP confirming a seamen's home parish was reduced from two to one.<sup>79</sup> Neither did the return of peace mean the end the registry. Early in 1698, the Lords discussed the registry's performance and cost and concluded that they had the same good reasons for maintaining it—to make manning the navy easier and to obviate impressment—as they had had for introducing it. Although roughly 13,000 seamen were registered by March 1698, well under of the hoped-for sum of 30,000, the Commons voted money to pay the promised 40s bounty and to fund the registry office for the rest of the year.<sup>80</sup> The seamen

<sup>76</sup> TNA, ADM 1/3997, Register Office to Admiralty, 27 January 1697, 29 September 1696, 8 August 1696.

<sup>77</sup> TNA, ADM 1/3997, Register Office to Admiralty, 18 December 1696, 18 January 1697.

<sup>78</sup> TNA, ADM 7/344, 64, Admiralty Memorial, 18 May 1697.

<sup>79</sup> TNA, ADM 1/3997, Register Office to Admiralty, 8 February 1697; *LJ* 16:16, 152; 8–9 William III, cap. xxiii, "Act to enforce the Act for the Encrease and Encouragement of Seamen," *SR*, 8:257–59, April 1697.

<sup>80</sup> "William III: March 1698," in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: William III, 1698*, ed. Edward Bateson (London, 1933), 118–72, at 129, reprinted at *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/will-mary/1698/pp118-172>; "Report of proceedings in Parliament. House of Commons, 3 March 1698," *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 12, 1697–1699, 152, 10 March 1698; Thomas Morin and Nicholas Jennings, *A proposal for the incouragement of seamen*, Wing M2767 (1697), sig. A1v.

might have been skeptical, but Parliament still believed in the registry's promise of a better, more orderly, and reliable method of manning the Royal Navy.

The registry did not survive much longer for two reasons, one financial and long-recognized and the other administrative and not yet fully appreciated. First, the registry failed because Parliament did not keep its word to the seamen: the 40s bounty was never paid. Within weeks of the Commons voting money toward the registered seamen's bounty, the registry commissioners, George Byng, Benjamin Timewell, and John Hill, reported to the Admiralty that the seamen and their families were increasingly agitated: "wee fear that want of this Money will be a great Prejudice to the Registry." The month prior (7 March 1698), the registry commissioners evidently wrote to the Navy Board to report that "the Registered Seamen with their Wives and Relations of such of them as were at sea were Dayly applying at the Office very Clamorous for their Money."<sup>81</sup> Their pleas went unanswered. Nearly a year later, registered seamen reminded the Commons of the March 1698 promise to pay the bounty, "but [that] no particular fund was appointed and the registered seamen have never received any part of such intended Bounty money, and many of them are since dead." Again, nothing happened. Significantly, in December 1702 the Commons learned from the registered seamen's wives that not paying the promised bounty "has been a discouragement to the Sailors, and a great Hindrance to the speedy manning of the Navy." The seamen's women were the ones, in other words, whose petition highlighted their governors' failure to take good paternalistic care of their humble seamen, with damaging consequences for national security. By that point there were 17,006 registered seamen, and the estimated total bounty owed to them was £131,347.<sup>82</sup>

Polemicists echoed the registered seamen's complaints in pamphlets that they composed for parliamentarians. William Hodges noted the injustice that "there are several commissioners and clerks [who] have some Hundreds a year for their salary to live Great, and not the poor miserable seamen that are Registered."<sup>83</sup> An anti-Orford agitator, Hugh Speke, described the register, in a tract submitted to Parliament, as another scheme concocted by the ministry to enrich the Junto Whig's clients in the navy administration. Speke named and blamed Thomas Reynolds, Orford's steward, responsible for deducting 6d monthly out of each navy sailor's pay, "and none of the registered seamen have as yet been paid." Thus, an innovative but fatally underfunded technique for managing maritime labor betrayed the seamen's trust, provoked their wives' righteous anger, and generated harsh public criticism.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>81</sup> TNA, BT/167/23, fols. 1–3, C. Langress to Anthony Hammond, The Registry in the Reign of William III; TNA, ADM 1/3997, Register Office to Admiralty, 18 April 1698, 7 March 1698.

<sup>82</sup> *CJ* 13:131, 19 January 1700; *The case of several register'd seamen, and their widows and children*, Wing C1156 (1700); *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 14, 1702–1705 (hereafter *CJ* 14), 68, 4 December 1702; *CJ* 14:102; Admiralty report to the House of Commons on the Registry Office, 4 January 1703, BL Add. MSS. 5439, fol. 165; TNA, BT/167/23, Benjamin Tymewell and Anthony Hammond, "Answer to House of Commons concerning the number of registered seamen," 1 December 1703, fol. 27.

<sup>83</sup> Hodges, *Ruin to ruin*, 29. See also Dennis, *Essay on the navy*, 37–38.

<sup>84</sup> Hugh Speke, *Some considerations ... laid before the honorable House of Commons, concerning the Admiralty and the Commissioners of the Navy*, Wing S4914B (London, 1700); Registered seamen petition the Commons for bounty money, *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 16, 1708–1711 (hereafter *CJ* 16), 96, 8 February 1709.

The second and equally damaging factor contributing to the registry's demise in the short term was a series of decisions that first overburdened and then broke the registry commission's ability to function. In essence, the registry office became collateral damage of postwar retrenchment, the fall of Orford, and their consequences for how the Admiralty managed the sailors' petitions to remove their Qs and Rs. In May 1698, King William ordered that the sick-and-wounded commission be dissolved in order to reduce the navy's expenditure.<sup>85</sup> The following month, the registry commissioners took over managing the care of sick and injured sailors under the navy's peacetime establishment. Then, just over one year later, following the advice of the Navy Board—which had by then “little prospect” of “the service to be Expected from the present Office for Registering seamen”—the Admiralty dissolved the registry office as a further cost-saving measure. Two members of the Navy Board “not charged with any particular offices” subsequently assumed the management of both the sick-and-wounded and the register branches.<sup>86</sup> Within weeks of this retrenchment and in the wake of Orford's resignation, the Admiralty also gave the Navy Board the job of reviewing the petitions from seamen concerning the Qs and Rs. Between July and September 1699, the number of officials employed in the registry office fell by two-thirds, from thirty-four to eleven; by December 1700, only five clerks remained. The retrenchment lowered the registry office's wage bill from £1,826 to £320 per annum, but an office with only a handful of employees, managed by a small number of “part-time” navy commissioners, could not realistically aspire to encourage over 10,000 seamen to register while also managing complaints about the previous ministry's policy to stop sick or injured sailors from deserting.<sup>87</sup> The registry office died of ministerial apathy and administrative atrophy, compelling the remaining registered seamen to turn their anger about the lack of bounty money toward Parliament.

### COMPELLING THE BODIES: PROPOSALS FOR A COMPULSORY REGISTER OF SEAMEN

The demise of the Royal Navy's one and only office for registering seamen during the Age of Sail transported naval biopolitics from the level of public administration up into the realm of state publicity. The promotion of a reformed register of seamen survived long after the administrative dénouement of the navy's registry office. Most advocates of a renewed register, including the commissioners themselves in January 1699, suggested that it become compulsory for all seafarers, with similar

<sup>85</sup> TNA, PC 2/77, Privy Council Meeting Minutes, 12 May 1698, fol. 90; TNA, ADM 1/5249, Privy Council to Admiralty, 12 May 1698; TNA, PC 2/77, 9 June 1698, fol. 93; TNA, ADM 1/5249, Privy Council to Admiralty, 23 June 1698.

<sup>86</sup> TNA, ADM 99/1, Sick and Wounded Commission Meeting Minutes, 17 June 1698; TNA, ADM 2/180, Admiralty to Navy Board, 7 July 1699, fol. 47; Navy Board to Admiralty, 12 July 1699, SER/104, 170–171, NMM; TNA, ADM 105/41, Register Office Meeting Minutes, 21 July 1699, final entry on 18 December 1699.

<sup>87</sup> *CJ* 13:368; TNA, ADM 2/180, Admiralty to Navy Board, 16 and 21 July 1699, fols. 56–57; “A catalogue of men employed in the Sick and Wounded service,” July 1698, BL Add. MSS. 28748, fols. 21–23. John Hill and Benjamin Timewell listed as “naval commissioners in general” in Edward Chamberlayne, *Angliae Notitia, or, The present state of England*, Wing C1836 (London, 1700), 549.

suggestions submitted to Parliament in the early years of the War of the Spanish Succession. For example, John Dennis proclaimed that a general and empire-wide register, coupled with a general increase in navy sailors' pay, would give "due Encouragement to the Seamen: effectually Manning the Navy at all times." A compulsory register would undoubtedly expand the government's knowledge about and power over the nation's maritime labor force, a prospect that its supporters believed could be justified by securing what Queen Anne in her 1703 throne speech called "an easy and less chargeable method" for the "speedy and effectual manning the Fleet."<sup>88</sup> Assessments varied, but commentators such as C. W. believed that the voluntary registry-plus-impressment method was inefficient and enormously expensive, both in money and in lives. A compulsory register would "put sole power of all Seamen primarily into Her Majesty's hands, but give her the Pre-option or Choice of them to serve the Fleet for the Publick Good."<sup>89</sup> Peter Rowe, author of a tract proposing a *True method for the increase of seamen*, argued that certain knowledge of seafarers' numbers and whereabouts was preferable to the haphazard and occasionally violent press gangs, "whose rude and disorderly management is very displeasing and ... attended with many Inconveniences." Daniel Defoe proposed a general register partly because impressment was riddled with abuses, injustices, violence, "oppressions, Quarrelling and oftentimes Murthers." The press was simply, Defoe testified to the Lords, too inconvenient not to try a compulsory register to man the Royal Navy. Similarly, Alexander Justice characterized "pressing promiscuously seamen and landsmen into the Sea-service" as the sort of "Rude and Barbarous" practice "not to be heard of, even under the arbitrary and despotick Government of Louis XIV." The French register was not, Justice claimed somewhat optimistically, an outgrowth of "Tyrannical Government; For there none but Seamen are obliged to go into the Sea-service, and they for the most part are as willing to serve the King as he is desirous of their service."<sup>90</sup> Manning the Royal Navy through a cost-effective and compulsory register of all seamen would better reflect, its supporters maintained, the civility of the nation whose interest the navy gallantly served. Such a register would also be better for the sailors' health.

Promoters of a reformed seamen's register emphasized its benefits to sailors' welfare. Indeed, prior to its retrenchment, the registry's commissioners insisted to the Admiralty that preserving some sort of link between manning and seamen's long-term well-being was important: "[T]he Advantages to seamen of access to Greenwich Hospital are so considerable," they asserted, "that the Commissioners cannot think of any thing else that would induce them to register."<sup>91</sup> Similarly, C. W. argued in *Tack About* that it was "absolutely necessary" that seamen be "taken care of in a particular manner," since they are "so useful a Race of men to

<sup>88</sup> TNA, ADM 1/3997, Register Office Memorandum to the Admiralty, 2 January 1699; Dennis, *Essay on the navy*, 39–40, 47; CJ 14:211, 9 November 1703.

<sup>89</sup> C. W., *Tack About: or, A new model of a Marine establishment, for raising seamen* (London, 1703), 8.

<sup>90</sup> Peter Rowe, *True method*, 6; Daniel Defoe, *Essays upon several projects: or, effectual ways for advancing the interest of the nation* (London, 1702), 313–14; Daniel Defoe, proposals for manning the fleet presented to the House of Lords, HMC, HoL MSS, n.s., 6:223–25, 10 February 1705; Alexander Justice, *A general treatise of the dominion and laws of the sea* (London, 1705), 648, 646.

<sup>91</sup> TNA, ADM 1/3997, Register Office to Admiralty, 2 January 1699.

our nation.” The tract called on the navy to appoint physicians in coastal communities to look after sick and injured naval seamen, “the Useful Race of mankind, so necessary to be preserved.”<sup>92</sup>

Proponents of naval biopolitics saw it as an antidote to the disorders that accompanied pressing seamen into navy ships. For example, John Swanne, a former navy chaplain, proposed a national program of funneling poor boys into the navy and merchant marine as apprentices, as a way to increase the total number of seamen. Such a program would be, he claimed, both cheaper and healthier than impressment. Swanne believed that this was true because experience showed him that youths and volunteers were better able to adapt to the rigors of life at sea. “It hath always been observed in the long East or West India Voyages, etc, that the Boys or Youths enjoy their Health much better than men,” Swanne declared, since boys’ “constitutions being yet green and unfixt, any Climate seems (as it were) natural or indifferent to them.” Pressed seamen, by contrast, were sickly by nature: “being thus dispos’d of against their Wills, the commotion of their Spirits hath such an Influence upon their Bodies, that they do nothing with Cheerfulness which naturally brings them to Distempers.” Unhealthiest of all were large numbers of pressed landsmen, “who not only fall sick themselves, but too often Infect the whole Fleet with Diseases.” The implication of all this discourse was clear: an orderly and well-regulated method of naval manning, one in which the state encouraged the transmutation of poor boys into seamen, would “save the Nation Money, since one Sea-man bred up from his youth to the sea, is worth generally two others, both for his Health and understanding of his business.”<sup>93</sup> In addition, according to a radical Whig critique of corruption in the post-Revolution navy’s administration, the over-reliance on impressment to man the Fleet, and the lack of concern for sick and injured seamen, had serious biopolitical consequences for the whole nation. According to the polemicist, the press “discourages young seamen from marrying.” When seamen stop making babies, the tract’s author continued,

the hindrance of propagation is a loss to the Nation’s Capital Stock, so that except these Abuses be redress’d, and the war brought to a speedy conclusion, the Numbers of our People must needs diminish; and we shall not only want Seamen, but land soldiers, and other useful Hands that might have been employ’d in Manufactures, Husbandry, Planting and other ways for the Defence of our Country, and increase of our wealth.<sup>94</sup>

This prediction of demographic and economic catastrophe was a logical outcome of thinking through the consequences of what could happen should the nation get the biopolitics of manning the Royal Navy wrong. It is also exactly the sort of rhetorical flourish that one would expect to find in promotional literature: adopt our manpower policy, fiscal-naval projectors such as Swanne declared, or face a national crisis.

Parliamentary debates during the War of the Spanish Succession about the best method of manning the navy were not only about numbers and speed; they also concerned navy sailors’ health. In December 1703, for example, a parliamentary

<sup>92</sup> C. W., *Tack About*, 8, 16, 14.

<sup>93</sup> J. Swanne, *A proposal to man the Navy Royal of Great Britain* (1709), 2, 6.

<sup>94</sup> *Old and True Way*, 20.

committee ordered the Admiralty and Navy Board to report on how to speed up naval manning and on the committee's "opinion [about] what way most contributes to the health of the seamen in the said Service by supplying them with Fresh Provisions or otherwise."<sup>95</sup> However, whereas King William's second parliament, with a large Whig majority, was willing to experiment with a voluntary seaman's register and additional benefits as a new method to encourage enlistment, the Commons in Queen Anne's first and second parliaments proved unwilling to let the Admiralty introduce a compulsory register. On two occasions, a bill for speedier manning that centered on a general compulsory register of seamen passed the Lords only to fail in the Commons, despite the fact that, in the second case, the bill incorporated the findings of a joint Admiralty–Navy Board committee on manning.<sup>96</sup> Rather than establish a reformed register, during the War of the Spanish Succession, Anne's parliaments tried to increase the number of seamen. In effect, Parliament encouraged parishes to start the transmutation of boys into seamen by sending male wards aged ten and over into the merchant marine. There they would serve up to age twenty-one, exempt from impressment until age eighteen. Thus, Anne's parliament could align itself with a locally managed naval biopolitics if doing so reduced the social and financial burden of parish governance.<sup>97</sup>

By contrast, proposals for a general register failed because enough Tories and skeptical Country-minded members distrusted, or perhaps wanted to be seen to distrust, measures that they associated with Whig grandees in the Lords like Orford. Additionally, the gentry probably feared the potential cost of a national register, while merchants were unwilling to give the state precedence in the maritime labor market.<sup>98</sup> However, political ideology or partisan allegiance do not map clearly onto parliamentarians' approaches to the navy's manning problem at the outset of Queen Anne's war. The Act to Increase the national stock of seamen by turning poor boys into useful sailors echoed the proposals of some Tories in the December 1703 committee that had studied manning, but otherwise it was not in principle objectionable to Whigs or Country members.<sup>99</sup> On the controversial question of whether or not England already possessed sufficient sailors to find adequate labor for both the navy and the merchant marine, the Whig James Brydges, the Tory Sir Edward Seymour, and a political neutral such as Treasury Secretary William Lowndes could all agree that there were indeed enough seamen in England. It is clear that most members were sufficiently underwhelmed by the performance of the voluntary register and overwhelmed by the outstanding debt for

<sup>95</sup> Discussion of parliamentary committee on manning the navy, 4 December 1703, SER/103, 444, NMM.

<sup>96</sup> *CJ* 14:240, 249–50, 284; HoL MSS, n.s., 1702–1704, 5:536–44; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. 17, 1701–1705, 421–22, 535; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. 18, 1705–1709, 161, 426, 432; HoL MSS, n.s., 6:524–37, 434–35; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 15, 1705–1708, 515, 526.

<sup>97</sup> 2–3 Anne, part 2. no. 3 cap. vi, "Act for Encrease of Seamen and Encouragement of Navigation," SR, 8:258–61, March 1704; *CJ* 14:249–50.

<sup>98</sup> Johnston, "Parliament and the Navy," 391, 398, 417. Cf. J. S. Bromley, "Away from Impressment: The Idea of a Royal Navy Reserve, 1696–1859," in *Britain and the Netherlands*, vol. 6, *War and Society*, ed. A. D. Duke and C. A. Tamse (The Hague, 1977), 168–88, at 185.

<sup>99</sup> Discussion of parliamentary committee on manning the navy, 27 November 1703, SER/103, 451–52, NMM; Discussion on 4 December 1703, SER/103, 454–55, NMM.

registered seamen's bounties, more than £410,000 early in 1710, to terminate the office and to quash its liabilities later that year.<sup>100</sup>

Nevertheless, proposals for a compulsory register lived on because the problem of manning the Royal Navy did not die. In the spring of 1720, Admiral Sir John Norris, whose father-in-law, Matthew Aylmer, was appointed to the registry commission in 1696, presented to the Commons what was an unsuccessful bill for a register of seamen.<sup>101</sup> The bill probably provoked the printed criticism of one John Orlebar, who claimed that "the seamen are so disgusted about the former Register (as to which they have been Money out of pocket instead of Receiving) that hardly any Inducement will engage them to come into another."<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, Norris again proposed a general register to the Cabinet in the autumn of 1739; this promoted yet another debate in the Commons over a compulsory register of seamen early the next year. Sir Robert Walpole, a former member of the 1706 Admiralty–Navy Board committee that had proposed a general register of seamen, was among the members speaking in favor of the registry bill.<sup>103</sup> In response to claims that a compulsory register represented a heinous assault on the seamen's liberty, such that "the loss of fleets, of armies, of dominions" would be less dreadful, Walpole recapitulated Crosfeild, Defoe, Dennis, and Swanne's assertions that impressment was "found ineffectual and insufficient for the attainment of its end."<sup>104</sup> Since both a compulsory register and impressment deprived seamen of their freedom, Walpole denied that liberty was truly the lens through which to view the bill. At its core, the navy's manning problem threatened national security, for "the naval armaments of Britain become far less useful to herself and less formidable to her enemies by the delays, with which we are always obstructed." Whatever method the state employed to man the navy, the seamen's freedom—and their bodies—were subject to the national interest. Any restraints that the government might impose on the seamen were simply, Walpole contended, "tacit acknowledgement of their usefulness, and an honorary distinction of those men who contribute most to the safety and prosperity of Britain."<sup>105</sup> However, the 1740 register bill failed. A plan for "speedily manning the navy" proposed in 1749 likewise died before passage, as did another register bill in 1759. Nevertheless, the fiscal-naval state continued to treat sailors differently from most other British subjects throughout the long eighteenth century. Seamen were a special population because of what

<sup>100</sup> Discussions of parliamentary committee on manning the navy, 27 November and 4 December 1703, SER/103, 451, 454, 456, NMM; Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne*, rev. ed. (London, 1987), 275–76. The debt on the bounty in October 1704 was £185,414. *CJ* 14:400; Order to inspect the registry, *CJ* 16:28, 29; *CJ* 16:491, 12 February 1710; 9 Anne cap. xv, "An Act for making good Deficiencies and satisfying the public Debts," clause lxx, *SR*, 9:446.

<sup>101</sup> TNA, ADM 105/41, Registry Office Meeting Minutes, 5 May 1696; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 19, 1718–1722, 301, 359, 364, 365; TNA, ADM 3/32, Admiralty Meeting Minutes, 14 March 1720.

<sup>102</sup> John Orlebar, *A scheme whereby His Majesty would never want a choice of able seamen on any occasion, and at the same time save the great charge and trouble of impressing* (London, [1720]).

<sup>103</sup> Admiral Sir John Norris, *Journal*, BL Add. MSS 28132, fols. 44–46, 25 September 1739; HoL MSS, n.s., 6:525.

<sup>104</sup> Debate in the House of Commons over a bill for registering seamen, 5 February 1740, in *Parliamentary History of England, 1739–1741*, ed. William Cobbett (London, 1812), 11:428.

<sup>105</sup> Cobbett, ed., *Parliamentary History*, 11:430.

their bodies could do for the nation and because there were too few of them to be found where and when they were most needed.<sup>106</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In the introduction to his 450-page *Memoirs of Transactions at Sea*, Admiralty Secretary Josiah Burchett marveled that, during the 1690s, the average number of seamen serving in the Royal Navy in any given month was 40,000 men, the highest number ever. Not insignificantly, Burchett suggested that “the looking well after them, when Wounded, or Sick, at Sea, and when they are put on Shore,” was the first duty of the navy toward its sailors. The execution of “Just and Charitable Care” in the management of seamen’s health would, he proposed, “much contribute, not only to the Preservation of the Seamen, but to the confirming in them a hearty Love and Affection to the Publick Service.”<sup>107</sup> Burchett’s declaration was a hopeful assertion in a biopolitical idiom of the seamen’s love for a “caring” fiscal-naval state.<sup>108</sup> The more the state cared for the bodies of seamen, the more seamen would be available, and from that healthy multitude of seamen more men would willingly risk life and limb to serve in the Royal Navy. Expressions of a similar biopolitical calculus were not limited to promoters of the armed forces. Indeed, around the end of Queen Anne’s war, a Quaker merchant, John Bellers, advertised for poor people’s hospitals because the “death of people from curable diseases is a loss to national wealth.” He also claimed that a college to teach industrious arts to the poor would “employ many of our Disbanded Army, and be a means to draw Thousands of Foreigners to us, and the more People we get from foreign countries, the more we draw off their strength to our selves.”<sup>109</sup> Bellers’s zero-sum calculation of demographic strength was probably idiosyncratic, but biopolitical thinkers like him shared the conviction that boosting the number of the right sort of people depended on an increased application of effective state power. It is also clear that they thought that more and healthier subjects, and a better nation, demanded a state that used superior administrative technologies to better regulate and enhance human life.

Foucault’s concept of biopolitics invites historians to re-assess the importance of governmental and public concerns for the health of servicemen as factors for extending and intensifying the scope and power of Britain’s imperial state, a state that spent most of its money on war between 1689 and 1815.<sup>110</sup> Late Stuart naval biopolitics

<sup>106</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 28, 1757–1761, 46, 249–50, 374, 390, 510, 516; Cobbett, ed., *Parliamentary History* 14:540–41; R. Pares, “The Manning of the Navy in the West Indies,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 20 (1937): 31–60; Neil R. Stout, “Manning the Royal Navy in North America, 1763–1775,” *American Neptune* 23, no. 3 (July 1963): 174–85.

<sup>107</sup> Josiah Burchett, *Memoirs of transactions at sea during the war with France; beginning in 1688 and ending in 1697* (London, 1703), sigs. a1r–1v, a2r.

<sup>108</sup> Erica Charters, “The Caring Fiscal-Military State during the Seven Years War,” *Historical Journal* 52, no. 4 (December 2009): 921–41.

<sup>109</sup> John Bellers, *An essay towards the improvement of physik* (London, 1714), 46, 38.

<sup>110</sup> Julian Hoppit, “Political Power and British Economic Life, 1650–1870,” in *The New Cambridge Economic History of Britain*, ed. Roderick Floud, Jane Humphries, and Paul Johnson (New York, 2014), 344–67, at 351–52; Steve Pincus and James Robinson, “Challenging the Fiscal-Military Hegemony: The



underlined that certain kinds of men must be created, disciplined, and preserved in order for the nation to achieve the requisite degree of power, prosperity, and peace. The register of seamen's failure did not stop polemicists from promoting an improved version of the technology, nor did politicians throughout the eighteenth century stop groping after new methods to boost the nation's stock of seamen.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, British seamen were the one class of subjects whose health and welfare consistently concerned, if only periodically, Georgian politicians and officials. The vast amounts of treasure spent on British naval hospitals, at first for Mediterranean and Caribbean stations and then at Portsmouth and Plymouth, manifested the fiscal-naval state's vision of seafarers as a strategic population.<sup>112</sup>

The Royal Navy's treatment hospitals and Greenwich naval hospital were always about more than healing and caring for sailors as a way of encouraging their heartfelt-love for public service. The hospitals' enormous size advertised the power and beneficence of the state, while their architecture promoted a seamless and orderly vision of monarchical charity.<sup>113</sup> The hospitals' regulations and disciplinary procedures similarly sought to foster orderly and pious habits among grateful communities of pensioners.<sup>114</sup> Although locals and visitors to London, and later to Plymouth and Portsmouth, were no doubt suitably impressed by the naval hospitals' scale and magnificence, the navy's ongoing struggles to maintain order within them and to acquire enough able-bodied seamen during wartime suggest that sailors were not wholly convinced of the justice and charity underlying the navy's health care infrastructure.

Naval biopolitics promoted quantitatively based techniques as a means to establish order over an often chaotic and obstreperous multitude of men.<sup>115</sup> It emerged as the contingent product of domestic political developments and a long, expensive foreign war. After 1689, there was as never before a consistently high demand for seamen for both the Royal Navy and the merchant marine. There was, simultaneously, greater need than ever before for the government to appeal to the political nation and to ordinary people for massive levels of financial and moral support to sustain the war effort. Parliament, polemicists, and the public responded by calling William's and Anne's regimes to account for the conduct of their wars—appeals that were often delivered in print. Petitions denouncing bureaucratic corruption along with

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British Case," in *The British Fiscal-Military States, 1660–c.1783*, ed. Aaron Graham and Patrick Walsh (London, 2016), 229–61. But see C. Williamson, *The British Navy and the State in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2004), 21–30, 35–44.

<sup>111</sup> TNA, PRO 30/8/248, Navy Office papers, relating to seamen, A bill for the better regulation and government of seamen in the merchant service, and also for promoting an increase of seamen for the use of His Majesty's navy, 1795, fols. 121–67.

<sup>112</sup> Steven Conway, *War, State and Society in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain and Ireland* (New York, 2006), 51; Cori Convertito, "Mending the Sick and Wounded: The Development of Naval Hospitals in the West Indies, 1740–1800," *Canadian Journal of History* 51, no. 3 (Winter 2016): 500–33.

<sup>113</sup> Dana Arnold, *The Spaces of the Hospital: Spatiality and Urban Change in London, 1680–1820* (London, 2013), 2–4, 18–21.

<sup>114</sup> Geoffrey L. Hudson, "Internal Influences in the Making of the English Military Hospital: The Early-Eighteenth-Century Greenwich," in *British Military and Naval Medicine: 1600–1830*, ed. Geoffrey L. Hudson (New York, 2007), 253–72.

<sup>115</sup> Richard J. Blakemore, "The Legal World of English Sailors, c. 1575–1729," in *Law, Labour and Empire: Comparative Perspectives on Seafarers, c. 1500–1800*, ed. Maria Fusaro, Bernard Allaire, Richard J. Blakemore, and Tjil Vanneste (Basingstoke, 2015), chap. 6.

pamphlets outlining projects to improve the workings of governance rained down on Westminster and the streets of London.<sup>116</sup> Naval biopolitics proposed ambitious and innovative solutions to an old administrative problem using a newly emerging form of political rhetoric: political arithmetic—a rhetoric of state power by, in, and of numbers of people. Thus, the late Stuart public sphere was the unwitting but necessary midwife at the birth of British fiscal-naval biopolitics.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013); Philip Loft, “Involving the Public: Parliament, Petitioning, and the Language of Interest, 1688–1720,” *Journal of British Studies* 55, no. 1 (January 2016): 1–23.

<sup>117</sup> Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, 98–99, 126.